

Mr. President, I yield the floor at this time and reserve the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, let me inquire of colleagues on this side who wish to speak. We started this morning by according the Senator from Michigan and the Senator from Rhode Island their opportunities. I have spoken on this side. I know Senator McCAIN has just arrived, and Senator CORNYN.

So I say to Senator McCAIN, I think you were the first on the floor.

Mr. McCAIN. I think Senator CORNYN was.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I yield to Senator McCAIN and ask to be recognized following him.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, I ask that Senator McCAIN follow me, and then we will rotate to this side and back to Senator CORNYN.

So at this time, I yield the floor and ask unanimous consent that recognition be given to the Senator from Arizona.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I am wondering if we could sequence speakers.

Mr. WARNER. Why don't you designate someone?

Mr. LEVIN. After Senator McCAIN is done, we would then seek to sequence the Senator from New York immediately after the Senator from Arizona.

Mr. WARNER. Following that, Senator CORNYN will speak.

Mr. LEVIN. And then Senator SALAZAR is here.

Mr. WARNER. He would follow Senator McCAIN and the distinguished Senator from New York and the Senator from Texas.

Mr. LEVIN. Let's leave it at that—

Mr. WARNER. Then the Senator from Colorado.

Mr. LEVIN. Because Senator FEINSTEIN is now on the floor.

Mr. WARNER. You designate that Senator.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the request?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Arizona.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I thank you. And I express my appreciation for the courtesy of the Senator from Texas who was on the floor before I was, and I appreciate his courtesy very much. I intend to take about 12 minutes, if that is agreeable to the Senator.

Mr. WARNER. Mr. President, we grant 12 minutes to the Senator from Arizona.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, I strongly oppose the amendment offered by the Senators from Michigan and Rhode Island and the amendment offered by the Senator from Massachusetts. These amendments share the same problem: calling for a withdrawal of American troops tied to arbitrary timetables rather than conditions in-country.

The amendment we are debating now states the sense of Congress that the

President should begin the phased redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq this year and that he should submit to Congress a plan with dates for this redeployment. I believe such a move would be a significant step on the road to disaster.

There is an understandable desire, 3 years after our invasion, to seek a quick and easy end to our intervention in Iraq. We face real difficulties there, we have made serious mistakes, and the costs have been very high. But these would pale in comparison to what is likely to unfold should we follow the course advocated by this resolution.

The violence we see on Iraqi streets today illustrates one fundamental fact: Iraqi forces are not yet capable of securing the country on their own. On the contrary, even with current troop levels, a level of violence in Iraq remains unacceptably high. To withdraw our forces would have one, all-too-predictable outcome—the violence currently constrained by our security operations around the country would rise commensurately. If the main enforcer of Government authority—coalition troops—draws down prematurely, the only questions will be the degree to which the increased violence engulfs the country and whether full-scale civil war erupts.

Much has been said about the effect of an American withdrawal on the Iraqi Government, and the sponsors of this amendment argue that a withdrawal would somehow force the Government to take on responsibilities it currently evades. But consider for a moment the effect of a withdrawal timetable on individual Iraqis outside the Government. An Iraqi Shi'a living in Baghdad or perhaps a Sunni living in Kirkuk learns that the Congress has called on our President to begin withdrawing troops this year and to present a timetable by which they will all return home. This knowledge changes the calculation made by individuals like these, decisions critical to the eventual security of Iraq. It makes joining the police forces or the Iraqi Government look like an increasingly bad bet. Participation in a militia appears better by comparison. And by changing these calculations across the country, we have made the goal of stability in Iraq more difficult to achieve. By signaling that an end to the American intervention is near, we will alienate our friends, who fear an insurgent victory, and tempt undecideds to join the antigovernment ranks.

Not every Member of this body agreed with the decision to topple Saddam Hussein, but when our country went to war, we incurred a moral duty to not abandon the people of Iraq to terrorists and killers. If we withdraw prematurely, risking all-out civil war, we will have done precisely that. I can hardly imagine that any U.S. Senator would want our Nation to suffer that moral stain.

But the implications of premature withdrawal from Iraq are not moral

alone; they directly involve our national security. Greater instability in Iraq would invite further Syrian and Iranian interference, bolstering the influence of two terror-sponsoring states firmly opposed to America's policy. Iraq's neighbors—from Saudi Arabia to Israel to Turkey—would feel their own security eroding and might be induced to act. This uncertain swirl of events would have a damaging impact on our ability to promote positive change in the Middle East, to say the least.

Withdrawing before Iraqis can bring stability to the country on their own would turn that land into a failed state in the heart of the Middle East. We have seen once before a failed state emerge after U.S. disengagement, and it cost us terribly. In pre-9/11 Afghanistan, terrorists found sanctuary to train and plan attacks with impunity. We know that there are today in Iraq terrorists who are planning attacks against Americans. We cannot make this fatal mistake twice.

Whether or not Members of this body believe that Iraq was part of the war on terror in 2003, it is simply incontrovertible that the war on terror is being fought there today. Al-Qaida is present in Iraq. Jihadists continue to cross the borders. Suicide bombers target American troops, Government personnel, and civilians. If we leave Iraq prematurely, the jihadists will interpret the withdrawal as a triumph of their brutal tactics against our power. And I do not believe they will stop with Iraq.

The letter released last year from Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden's lieutenant, to Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi draws out the implications. The Zawahiri letter is predicated on the assumption that the United States will leave Iraq and that al-Qaida's real game begins as soon as we abandon the country. In his missive, Zawahiri lays out a four-stage plan—establish a caliphate in Iraq, extend the "jihad wave" to the secular countries neighboring Iraq, clash with Israel—none of which shall commence until the completion of stage one: expel the Americans from Iraq. Zawahiri observes that the collapse of American power in Vietnam, "and how they ran and left their agents," suggests that "we must be ready starting now." We cannot let them start, now or ever. We must stay in Iraq until the Government there has fully functioning security forces that can keep the insurgents at bay and ultimately defeat them.

Some argue that it is our very presence in Iraq that has created the insurgency and that if we end the occupation, we end the insurgency. But, in fact, by ending military operations, we are likely to empower the insurgency. The fighting is not simply against coalition forces; rather, the insurgents target the Iraqi Government, opposing militias, and various sects and ethnicities. There is no reason to think that an American drawdown would discourage these fights.